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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7038
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 5490
RUEHMu/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 0091
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1912
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 6558
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 001196

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: THAI HOUSE SPEAKER ON CONGRESS AND BALANCING
CHINESE INFLUENCE - SEEKING CLOSER THAI-US LEGISLATIVE TIES

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason: 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (C) Speaker of the House of Representatives Chai Chidchob, in a May 14 call by the Ambassador, requested assistance in helping the Thai House build stronger ties with its U.S. counterpart. Chai said that the Thai-American Parliamentary Friendship Group, consisting of 121 members, had reached out to the U.S. legislature but had received no response. (Subsequently, the lead Thai House staffer on this issue clarified to us that the Group had written to the Thai MFA to request assistance, but he did not know whether anyone had contacted the U.S. Congress on the Group's behalf.)

¶2. (C) Chai explained that Thailand would host an ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) meeting in August, and he asked the Ambassador to help ensure a U.S. representative would attend. Chai hoped the U.S. could provide balance against Chinese influence. He warned that China was working actively to cultivate ties with the Thai parliament; he had noticed that Thai legislators frequently traveled to China, while the number of Thai MPs traveling to the U.S. had declined.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador said he would try to assist, but he added that the most effective way for the Thai House to reach out to members of the U.S. Congress would be through a Thai Ambassador in Washington. The fact that Thailand had been without an Ambassador in Washington for over a year strongly disadvantaged Thailand. (Note: As of May 13, the MFA Director General for American Affairs believed the Thai Ambassador-designate would receive a royal audience sometime in June; this is the final step required before Thai Ambassadors depart for their overseas assignments. End Note.)

¶4. (C) Chai also urged that the USG provide Thailand with further assistance in economic matters, such as by not restricting imports of Thai goods. Chai remarked that China had become more assertive in building economic ties to Thailand, and he hoped that China would not supplant the U.S.'s traditional role.

JOHN